

# ENSEMBLE 360

Premieres on Tuesday 11 May, 1.00pm

Live-streamed Performance

Crucible Studio, Sheffield

**BENJAMIN NABARRO** violin

**CLAUDIA AJMONE-MARSAN** violin

**GEMMA ROSEFIELD** cello

**RACHEL ROBERTS** viola

**TIM HORTON** piano

**AMY BEACH (1867–1944)**

**Piano Trio Op.150**

Allegro

Lento espressivo

Allegro con brio

Amy Beach's Piano Trio was completed in 1938 and published the following year. It is her last major work (it was followed by some short vocal pieces and a 'Pastorale for woodwind quintet'). After a productive composing career, with important chamber works including a Violin Sonata (1896) and a Piano Quintet (1907), the Piano Trio shows Beach writing in a more concise style, though an entry in her diary on 2 June 1938 reveals that not all the ideas were new: 'Trying a trio from old material. Great fun'. As Beach's biographer, Adrienne Fried Bloch, has noted, the Trio incorporates 'French modern, late Romantic and folk elements'. It was finished on 18 June 1938 during two weeks of intensive work at the MacDowell Colony. The first theme of the Allegro is introduced by the cello and the second (which is derived from it) is initially heard on the violin. The piano figuration throughout the movement has strong echoes of Debussy. The second movement comprises a lyrical and expressive outer section framing a much livelier scherzo. The slower music was drawn from one of Beach's songs composed in 1897, while the sharply contrasting scherzo is based on an Inuit song, 'The Returning Hunter'. The main theme of the finale almost certainly had an Inuit inspiration too (a similar tune is in the same collection as 'The Returning Hunter'), and this is set effectively against a more tender subsidiary theme. The coda is derived from the Inuit theme and it brings Beach's Trio to an impressive close.

**BEACH** Piano Trio

**COLERIDGE-TAYLOR** Piano Quintet

**SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875–1912)**

**Piano Quintet in G minor Op.1**

Allegro con moto

Larghetto

Scherzo

Allegro molto – Vivace – Tempo I

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in London and entered the Royal College of Music in 1890 to study the violin. His ability as a composer soon became apparent, and an anthem written in 1891 (when he was still in his mid-teens) was immediately published by Novello. He studied composition with Charles Villiers Stanford, and became his favourite pupil. The Piano Quintet was first performed in Croydon on 9 October 1893, when Coleridge-Taylor was 18 years old. He often spoke of his enthusiasm for Dvořák's music, and, coincidentally, this Quintet dates from the same year of the 'New World' Symphony. The influence of the Czech composer is apparent at the very start of the Quintet, where the modal inflections of the opening suggest something of Dvořák's style. The second main theme is introduced by the piano, revealing Coleridge-Taylor as composer with a gift for distinctive lyrical melodies even in his teens. The Larghetto opens with a long-breathed cello melody over delicate piano accompaniment, before the violin takes up the theme. Ranging freely through a number of keys, the music reaches at dramatic, declamatory climax before returning to the tranquility of the opening. The Scherzo is notable for its fiery energy and the delight with which Coleridge-Taylor uses cross-rhythms and syncopation. The finale is predominantly dark in mood and frequently brooding until a triumphant coda brings the work to a close.

The critic for the Croydon Advertiser was 'astonished' by the maturity of this work, and within a few years Coleridge-Taylor attracted many admirers. Arthur Sullivan attended a performance of Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* in 1898, noting in his diary that he was 'much impressed by the lad's genius. He is a composer, not a music-maker.' The same year, Edward Elgar described Coleridge-Taylor as 'far and away the cleverest fellow going amongst the young men' in a letter urging the Three Choirs Festival to give him a commission (they wisely followed his advice – the work, a *Ballade for orchestra*, earned a standing ovation). In his works from the mid-1890s onwards, Coleridge-Taylor explored more of the music of his African heritage (he was of part Creole descent) than can be heard in the early Piano Quintet, but it remains a startling discovery: a student work by an immensely gifted composer who died at the age of 37.

Nigel Simeone

## ENSEMBLE 360

Ensemble 360 has gained an enviable reputation across the UK not only for the quality and integrity of its playing, but also for its ability to communicate the music to a range of different audiences. Formed in 2005, 11 musicians of international standing came together to take up residency in Sheffield with Music in the Round, establishing a versatile group of five string players, five wind players and a pianist. The musicians believe that concerts should be informal, friendly and relaxed occasions, and perform 'in the round' wherever possible. Critical acclaim has greeted all the group's CDs to date: Mozart and Spohr (ASV Gold), Beethoven and Poulenc (Nimbus Alliance).

## MUSIC IN THE ROUND

Music in the Round is the leading national promoter of chamber music. For over 35 years we have been bringing people and music closer together through our friendly and informative style of 'in the round' performances, touring to numerous venues around the country as well as presenting two concert series and the Sheffield Chamber Music Festival each year at our home venue, the Crucible Studio. Our concerts are characterised by passion, excellence and proximity, and even in these challenging times of a global pandemic we have been striving to connect people through music by presenting socially-distanced live concerts and creating films featuring our musicians to enjoy online.

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING SHEFFIELD CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Sheffield Chamber Music Festival is the highlight of the year for all of us, so although it's online again, we have put everything into creating a digital event that everyone can come together to enjoy, across Sheffield, South Yorkshire, the UK, and even the world!

Your generosity in the last year has made it possible for us to continue with our aim to bring people closer to music. It is thanks to you, our Friends, supporters and audiences, that we are able to bring you such a full Festival programme this May.

We are not charging for any of the events, but we are relying on your generosity to keep us going. For over a year now, musicians have been unable to work properly and earn a decent living. After facing such a challenging time for so long they need us more than ever. Any support that you give us makes a difference to them. **Please donate as you feel: every single gift makes a difference.**